Appendix A: Promising Practices

During the audit, we found some promising practices at the school districts and at one post-secondary education institution. They are summarized below:

School districts

Prince George School District—For the past few years, the Prince George School District has included in its accountability report a "Success for All" goal that reads: "Increase school completion rates of aboriginal and at risk students by improving transition rates [for] grades 6-12." The focus was put on social responsibility, parental involvement and Aboriginal students (an important and at risk component of Prince George's school population).

The superintendent considers his success factors for literacy to be:

- knowing how students learn;
- using a constructive approach to learning;
- finding the right balance between directed learning and the student's need for challenge;
- assessing the students' needs;
- assessing the students' progress towards the achievement of provincial goals (e.g., classroom assessments);
- preparing teachers to accommodate a variety of learning styles/rates;
- doing more for students before Grade 8 is reached; and
- trying to limit the number of students in a class.

The school district has been successful in providing information and activities related to literacy. For example, it has been:

- learning from focus groups held with students;
- developing guides to help teachers and principals assess and measure student achievement;
- implementing a variety of literacy data-driven action plans aimed at mitigating risks related to vulnerable students; and
- completing staff and administrator development guides—which include literacy—related to training and mentoring programs.

In the most recent accountability report it drafted, the school district also placed a strong focus on literacy.

Kamloops School District — This school district periodically updates its three-year district literacy plan. The plan's focus is currently on reading from kindergarten to Grade 2. The plan's emphasis is similar to that in the Prince George School District: focusing on promoting social responsibility and supporting Aboriginal students. Also, the district conducted a variety of data-driven literacy actions. Examples include conducting an assessment of the gender achievement gap for the district, offering year-round schooling, running video-conferencing tests and web casts for rural areas, offering a recreation and reading program during the summer months, and holding literacy-specific training sessions for its staff.

Vancouver School District — Literacy has been part of this school district's accountability report for years: "Goal 1 — All students will read and write with competence, confidence and enjoyment." Efforts are being taken at all Grade levels, with specific attention paid "to improve the literacy levels of the most vulnerable children." The school district also issues a very informative periodic literacy report that provides a summary and lessons learned of the district's various literacy projects. Separate project reports showing comparatives between planned and actual results are also being prepared for some literacy projects. These literacy and project reports help the district in its planning efforts for the upcoming school year.

Post-secondary institution

College of New Caledonia (Lakes Campus) — To better respond to local needs, the college included literacy among its goals. Its philosophy is to incorporate literacy training in all of its programs. Also, all literacy programs incorporate a component of "wrap–around support" (including transportation to classes, food, counselling, assistance with housing and health issues, access to bursaries, life skills training such as stress management, and child care). In addition, access to programs is enhanced by eliminating fees and providing programming in outlying communities, including on First Nations reserves.

Appendix A: Promising Practices

The Ministry's response included two practices believed to be promising for post-secondary institutions. We include this information here, but we did not audit it. .

Thompson Rivers University (TRU) — TRU's First Steps program provides a holistic approach to educational opportunity for young mothers. The program offers a continuum of curriculum from basic literacy to Adult Dogwood and includes the opportunity to access post secondary courses where appropriate. It is cohort based and includes daycare, family support, and parenting skills training. For young mothers waiting to get into the program, transition planning and support are also provided. First Steps is offered through strong partnership with community agencies, the Boys and Girls Club, Interior Community Society, Secwepmec Cultural Education Society and works cooperatively with School District 73.

Vancouver Community College — ABE Youth Program. This 60 student academic year program works with street youth referred by both the Broadway Youth Centre and numerous counsellors from several school districts in the greater Vancouver area. The program is located off campus at Broadway and Fraser and helps youth who have not completed their Grade 10 participate in a program that helps them achieve their intermediate level/Grade 10 in English, Math and Social Studies in an environment with their peers. Due to demand and waitlists the program has been expanded recently from 40 to 60 students and has extended its program to include some Grade 11 or Advanced programming. Recently awarded $30,000 in support from the Variety Club for computer equipment, this program is delivered in a setting where youth can access counselling, a breakfast club and help with finding accommodation through the Broadway Youth Centre.

Appendix B: Office of the Auditor General: 2007/08 reports issued to date

Report 1 — April 2007

Special Audit Report to the Speaker: The Financial Framework Supporting the Legislative Assembly

Report 2 — June 2007

The Child and Youth Mental Health Plan: A Promising Start to Meeting an Urgent Need

Report 3 — October 2007

A Review of the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project: Governance and Risk Management

Report 4 — December 2007

Follow-up of 2004/2005 Report 3: Preventing and Managing Diabetes in British Columbia

Report 5 — January 2008

Preventing Fatalities and Serious Injuries in B.C. Forests: Progress Needed

Report 6 — February 2008

Literacy: Creating the Conditions for Reading and Writing Success

The above reports can be accessed through our website at http://www.bcauditor.com and can also be requested in print through our office.